



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
*1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990*

February 13, 2003

The Honorable Alex Deccio, Chair
Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee
213A Newhouse Building
Post Office Box 40414
Olympia, Washington 98504-0414

Dear Senator Deccio:

I am writing as the chair of the State Board of Health to share the Board's support for the concept of Senate Bill 5495, relating to creating the environmental health tracking system, scheduled for a hearing before your committee on February 13. Many of the goals of SB 5495 correspond with two of the Board's priority work areas, environmental health.

The Board's Environmental Health work seeks to:

- Improve interagency coordination in responding to environmental health issues.
- Examine community assessment methods used by public health agencies and communities to identify and prioritize local environmental health issues.
- Improve community engagement in community assessment and environmental health prioritization processes.

SB 5495 would facilitate coordination among the Department of Health, Department of Ecology, Department of Labor and Industries, and the UW School of Public Health, four state institutions central to monitoring, examining and identifying environmental health threats in Washington.

The bill would improve the accessibility, relevance and comprehensiveness of regional environmental health data, thereby improving communities' abilities to identify and prioritize environmental health issues.

A nationwide survey found widespread public awareness about environmental causes of chronic illness and concern that there is no national network to monitor chronic diseases and environmental health threats (<http://healthyamericans.org/campaigns/tracking/>).

Locally, Washington communities have expressed concerns regarding lead, arsenic, and other environmental risks, and government responses to these perceived risks. SB 5495

would address these concerns by providing Washington communities and agencies information needed to develop more effective strategies to prevent chronic disease from environmental hazards.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Lake".

Linda Lake
Chair, Washington State Board of Health

cc: Senator Karen Keiser
Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee Members
Washington State Board of Health Members
Ms. Ree Sailors, Governor's Office of Health Policy
Mr. Bill White, Department of Health
Ms. Patty Hayes, Department of Health
Mr. Don Sloma, State Board of Health